

Late last summer, Ambassador Ryan Crocker pointed out the problems that this refugee crisis is posing for the United States itself when he expressed deep concerns that if we don't do a better job of helping to protect the people whose lives are at risk because they have worked for the United States, if we turn our back on them when they flee the country, than people will be less willing to work with us, and we won't be able to rely on those who make such a difference in terms of services of interpreters and guides and others providing essential services for United States activities in Iraq.

I have been deeply concerned about this problem over the course of the last year, finding out how far we have fallen short of the mark when I was working with a group of high school students in Oregon and returning U.S. Oregon National Guard troops. They were fighting to bring to the United States their interpreter, a young woman who had been marked for death in Iraq because of her cooperation with the United States. It was frustrating over the course of the months that we worked with them because I really had no good explanation for these young people, the Guard and the high school students, about why it should be so hard for the United States to help people who helped us.

It is not just people who had helped the United States who have fled the country, it is not just those that are concerned about Sunni and Shia violence; the Mandeans, an ancient people, a small Christian sect, are caught in the crossfire of this civil war in Iraq, and they are at risk of being wiped out in their entirety for all time.

Having been inspired by these young Oregonians, having been inspired, by other dedicated advocates, for example, Kirk Johnson, a former AID staff member, who chronicled the plight of over 600 people at risk, of whom less than 10 had been resettled, we introduced legislation to deal with the mismatch between the scope of the problem and the limited resources the United States Government has put into addressing it.

Indeed, after we "won the war in Iraq," the situation became worse on the ground, and we witnessed the explosion of this crisis. For 2005 and 2006, the numbers of people we helped were miniscule. Out of the 4 million people who have left their homes, we allowed 198 Iraqis in the United States in 2005, and 202 last year, almost entirely people who were being reunited with their families, who had been made refugees in 1991.

There were glimmers of hope this year, with the administration promising, to allow 25,000 people into the United States, which was the same number of refugees that the Prime Minister of Sweden told me that Sweden was willing to accept. Later, the U.S. number fell to 7,000, and then ultimately we only let 1,800 Iraqis in throughout the entire last fiscal year.

Even that was after a last-minute rush, because the first 6 months we had only allowed 69 Iraqi refugees.

There is good news, however, because due to an amendment by Senator KENNEDY that was adopted in the Senate for the Defense authorization bill, largely taken from provisions in our House legislation, we are actually going to be able to make some real progress. We will be able to process some of these refugees in their own country. Until now, people had been forced to leave Iraq. Even though we have the largest embassy in the history of the planet, they had to leave Iraq before they could apply for refugee status. We have an opportunity to increase to 5,000 a year those people who are at risk because they have helped us. These are important steps, and I hope they are approved.

But much more needs to be done. First, we have to actually do what is authorized. Second, we need to put some real money into it, not just the \$250 million for refugee assistance that is currently pending. That is rounding error, given the billions that we have spent in Iraq that we can't even account for.

It is important for us to scale our commitment to make sure that we meet the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of our war in Iraq.

“TECHNICALITIES”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to my colleagues' remarks from last week that "technically, the troops are funded right now," as if the bottom line on the budget report is sufficient for some in this chamber to ensure that our war fighters have all the resources that they need.

Well, war is a serious business, Mr. Speaker, and we are indeed a Nation at war. Our men and women in harm's way don't have time for our political games or "technicalities." Clever word play isn't going to turn DOD ink from red to black. There is nothing "technical" about the risk our war fighters face every day. They are not fighting an enemy that "technically" wants to do us harm. Instead, they are fighting a lethal terrorist network actually bent on spreading real Islamist totalitarianism in Iraq and across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, the success of the surge strategy in Iraq is not making things "technically" better. We are seeing actual results and real improvement on the ground. Even the most liberal newspapers admit that the improvement is real. IED attacks are not "technically" down; they are actually fewer in number, fewer bombs being

placed to attack our troops and Iraqi allies. Casualties rates are not "technically" down. We are actually losing fewer Americans as the security conditions improve.

These improving conditions are not "technically" creating reconciliation. Iraqis across the country are really beginning to bridge age-old divides as they unite to secure their future. By playing political games with vital war funding, we are not "technically" sending a message to our war fighters in harm's way, we are actually putting all of the progress that they have made in very real jeopardy. Mr. Speaker, is that a message we choose to send?

My own constituents, civilian and soldiers alike, work at Fort Campbell, home of the 101st Airborne. This holiday season, two brigades of the 101st are serving in Afghanistan and two more in Iraq. They are supported by the men and women at Fort Campbell, and their families are embraced by the citizens of Clarksville and Montgomery County, Tennessee.

This Christmas, if we don't actually provide DOD the funding they need, my constituents will begin to get furlough letters in the mail. There is nothing "technical" about being laid off. There is nothing "technical" about being told that in 60 days you won't get a paycheck. It is very real.

Before this Chamber actually adjourns so that we can spend happy and comfortable holidays with our families, I would ask my colleagues to please remember these constituents of Clarksville, Tennessee, who are actually in harm's way in Iraq and Afghanistan and who are actually worried about being laid off next year.

I urge my colleagues not to return home until we actually give the troops the very real funding that they need. Our men and women are not "technicalities," they are indeed our sons, our daughters, our neighbors, our constituents. They are the bravest among us. They need our support and they deserve a Congress who will honor their service and who will do our job.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 41 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. PASTOR) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer: